

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 SNM-05 DEAE-00
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO USMISSION GENEVA
INFO AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

S E C R E T STATE 055439

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:SNAR,

SUBJECT:SOVIET INTEREST IN PURCHASING NEPALESE OPIUM

REF: (A) KATHMANDU 944; (B) 77 KATHMANDU 4776;
(C) 77 KATHMANDU 3912; (D) 77 MOSCOW 13303

1.DESPITE APPARENTLY SUCCESSFUL REPRESENTATIONS IN WASHINGTON, KATHMANDU, AND GENEVA TO DISCOURAGE GON FROM PRODUCING OPIUM FOR EXPORT, WE REMAIN CONCERNED ABOUT SOVIET INTEREST IN PURCHASING OPIUM FROM NEPAL. MAJORITY OF NEPALESE OPIUM AND OPIUM-DERIVED PRODUCTS WOULD PROBABLY FLOW INTO THE ILLICIT INTERNATIONAL TRAFFIC.

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2. THERE ARE NOW SEVERAL INDICATIONS THAT SOVIETS, ALTHOUGH SIGNATORIES OF SINGLE CONVENTION WHICH PROHIBITS IMPORTATION OF OPIUM FROM NEPAL,ENCOURAGED NEPALESE TO INITIATE OFFICIALLY SPONSORED CULTIVATION OF OPIUM. IN SEPTEMBER 1977, AFTER SOVIET APPROACH TO NEPALESE, GON WAS STILL "GIVING ACTIVE CONSIDERATION TO POSSIBLE CONTROLLED CULTIVATION OF OPIUM FOR EXPORT" (REF C). IN OCTOBER A KATHMANDU PRO-SOVIET

NEWSPAPER SUPPORTED NEPALESE OPIUM PRODUCTION AND SOVIET COUNSELOR "HEDGED" ON DCM'S QUERY CONCERNING SOVIET INTEREST IN PURCHASING OPIUM (REF B). ACCORDING TO THE LATEST RE-

PORT, IN LATE AUGUST 1977 NEPALESE TRADE DELEGATION IN USSR WAS TOLD THAT THE SOVIETS WERE PREPARED TO PURCHASE 25 TO 30 METRIC TONS OF OPIUM PER ANNUM AND OFFERED TO SEND ADVISER ON OPIUM PRODUCTION TO NEPAL (REF A).

3. NEA/INS CALLED IN SOVIET 1ST SECRETARY IVANOV WHO, AFTER CHECKING WITH MOSCOW, STATED IN DECEMBER THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY "HAS NO INFORMATION REGARDING PRODUCTION OF OPIUM BY THE NEPALESE." NONETHELESS, WE SUSPECT THAT THE SOVIETS DID DEMONSTRATE INTEREST IN PURCHASING NEPALESE OPIUM AND SUGGEST THAT US MISSION GENEVA, AS RECOMMENDED REF D, REMIND THE SOVIETS, THAT U.S. REMAINS CONCERNED ABOUT ANY POSSIBLE ENCOURAGEMENT OF NEPALESE OPIUM PRODUCTION.

4. MISSION MAY DRAW ON FOLLOWING TALKING POINTS:

-- WE HAVE HEARD THAT SOVIETS EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN PURCHASING OPIUM FROM THE NEPALESE GOVERNMENT. SINCE THE SOVIET UNION IS A SIGNATORY TO THE SINGLE CONVENTION, WHICH PROHIBITS THE IMPORTATION OF OPIUM FROM STATES (INCLUDING NEPAL) NOT AUTHORIZED TO SELL IT, WE HOPE THAT THE USSR
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WILL REFRAIN FROM ENCOURAGING THE CULTIVATION OF OPIUM IN NEPAL.

-- THE GON HAS PROVED UNABLE TO ADEQUATELY CONTROL THE CULTIVATION AND ILLICIT DISTRIBUTION OF OTHER NARCOTIC SUBSTANCES. THEREFORE, IN OUR VIEW, "LEGAL" PRODUCTION OF OPIUM WOULD PROBABLY BE ABUSED AND NEPALESE OPIUM WOULD FLOW INTO THE ILLICIT INTERNATIONAL TRAFFIC.

-- THE MOST EFFECTIVE APPROACH TO THE CONTROL OF OPIUM IS TO DISCOURAGE THE SPREAD OF POPPY CULTIVATION.

-- LEGAL OPIUM PRODUCTION IS SUFFICIENT TO MEET WORLD DEMAND. CHRISTOPHER

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